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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8597  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0245  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0267  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 1944  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0687  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0741  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5// PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2// PRIORITY  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0491  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1744  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0038  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1294

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000347

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2017

TAGS: [PROP](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [IR](#) [RS](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN WAR PROPAGANDA INFLUENCES TURKMENISTANIS

Classified By: Acting Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (U) Moscow's tabloid "Argumenty Nedeli" published on March 15 a sensational prediction that the U.S. planned to attack Iran at 0400 hours on April 6. March 30 at a press conference at RIA-Novosti, retired General Leonid Ivashov "confirmed" that such an attack is possible. Also on March 30, RIA-Novosti reported Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Denisov and First Deputy Defense Minister General Yuriy Baluyevsky "confirmed" Moscow had information about the planned U.S. attack on Iran code-named "Operation Bite." In recent days, this story has flooded Russian television channels widely watched in Turkmenistan.

¶2. (SBU) At a meeting with academic exchange program alumni on March 31, the first question posed to A/CDA was "Is it true you are going to war with Iran?" In recent days, at diplomatic receptions there has been a good deal of sardonic humor about the "4 am Good Friday attack." On April 5, a local citizen told an EmbOff that some citizens of Ashgabat are concerned enough about the "imminent war" that they are stocking up on food for the duration and changing travel plans.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: While Russian black propaganda about the "imminent Operation Bite" can easily be dismissed as tabloid sensationalism getting out of hand, it has an effect on people in Turkmenistan (and likely elsewhere in Central Asia) especially since Iran is an important player in the region. It might be useful for Washington to redouble efforts to develop more aggressive ways to counter Russian active measures. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND